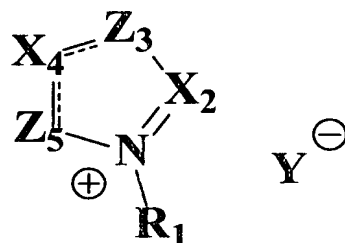


Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A multilayer film comprising a substrate bearing an aligned, fixed liquid crystal layer wherein the aligned liquid crystal layer contains an azolium salt represented by formula (I):



I

wherein

the subscripts for X₂ and X₄ and for Z₃ and Z₅ represent the ring positions with N being the "1" position, and each X₂ and X₄ is independently N or C-R;

each Z₃ and Z₅ is independently N, N-R, C-(R)(R), O, S, SO₂, SO, C=O, C=S, or C=NR;

each R group including R₁ bonded to the N at the "1" position is independently hydrogen or a substituent; and

Y is a charge balancing anion, which may be a separate moiety or part of ~~an X, Z, or R~~ X₂, Z₃, X₄, Z₅, or R₁ ;

provided two or more ~~X, Z and R~~ X₂, Z₃, X₄, Z₅, or R₁ groups ~~may~~ optionally form a phenyl, naphthyl, pyrizinyl, pyridyl, quinolinyl, cyclohexenyl, oxazolyl, or pyrazolyl ring;

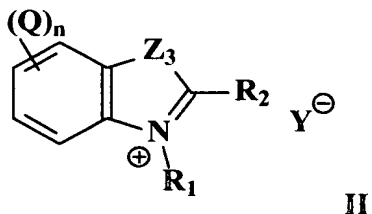
provided the salt may be part of an oligomer or polymer.

2. (currently amended) The film of claim 1 wherein each ~~X~~ X₂ and X₄ is C-R.

3. (original) The film of claim 1 wherein Z₃ is S or N-R.

4. (original) The film of claim 2 wherein Z_3 is S or N-R.
5. (original) The film of claim 2 wherein Z_3 is S.
6. (original) The film of claim 2 wherein Z_3 is N-R.
7. (original) The film of claim 1 wherein X_2 is C- R_2 wherein R_2 is H or a methyl group.
8. (original) The film of claim 1 wherein X_4 and Z_5 join to form a ring.
9. (original) The film of claim 1 wherein the ring is a phenyl ring.
10. (original) The film of claim 1 wherein the ring is a cyclohexenyl ring.
11. (original) The film of claim 1 wherein X_4 and Z_5 are both C-R groups.
12. (currently amended) The film of claim 11 wherein ~~both~~ R_4 and R_5 are bonded at the 4 and 5 positions, respectively, and are selected from H, alkyl, alkoxy, or aryl groups.
13. (original) The film of claim 1 wherein the compound of formula (I) is a bis compound joined at the 1 position.
14. (original) The film of claim 1 wherein Y is an anion selected from the group consisting of BF_4 , PF_6 , CF_3CO_2 , Br, Cl, COO, SO_3 , and CH_3SO_3 .
15. (original) The film of claim 1 wherein the azolium salt is present in an amount of at least 0.1 wt% of the layer.
16. (original) The film of claim 1 wherein the azolium salt is present in an amount of at least 0.1-10 wt% of the layer.
17. (original) The film of claim 1 wherein the azolium salt is present in an amount of at least 0.25-5 wt% of the layer.

18. (currently amended) The film of claim 1 wherein the azolium salt is a benzazolium represented by formula (II):



wherein

the subscripts represent the ring positions;

Z₃ is N, N-R, C-(R)(R), O, S, SO₂, SO, C=O, C=S, or C=NR;

each R group, including R₁ and R₂, is independently hydrogen or a substituent;

Y is a charge balancing anion, which may be a separate moiety or part of the azolium; and

each Q independently represents a substituent and n is an integer from 0 to 4.

19. (currently amended) The film of claim 18 wherein, Z₃ is N-R, O, or S where R is H or a substituent.

20. (original) The film of claim 18 wherein the azolium salt is present in an amount of at least 0.1 wt% of the layer.

21. (original) The film of claim 18 wherein the azolium salt is present in an amount of at least 0.1-10 wt% of the layer.

22. (original) The film of claim 18 wherein the azolium salt is present in an amount of at least 0.25-5 wt% of the layer.

23. (original) A process for imparting an increased tilt angle to a polymeric liquid crystal layer upon curing comprising including in that layer an azolium salt compound according to claim 1 prior to curing.

24. (original) A process for imparting an increased tilt angle to a polymeric liquid crystal layer upon curing comprising including in that layer an azolium salt compound according to claim 18 prior to curing.

25. (previously presented) A compensator comprising the film of claim 1.
26. (previously presented) An optical device comprising the film of claim 1.
27. (previously presented) A liquid crystal display comprising the film of claim 1.